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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effects of youth work experience on subsequent employability. The paper begins with a speculative consideration of the ways in which work experience might affect later employability. Three types of research literature are then reviewed: (1) economic studies of the relation between youth work and subsequent employment and earnings; (2) research on the effects of work experience on adolescent development; and (3) evaluation studies of employment and training programs. The next section presents a radical critique of current educational programs. It is suggested that the most effective means of enhancing youth employability would be to make more equally available attractive and rewarding employment opportunites and to increase the number of such jobs by improving the quality of work life. An ecological perspective which serves as framework for recommendations on research and programs is then proposed, and ten recommendations on programs and five on research are formulated. (Author/APM)

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Youth Work Experience and Employability

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Executive Summary

This paper is an examination of the effects of youth work experience on subsequent employability. It is part of a larger effort based on the belief that five factors are critical to the ability of people to find, hold, and work productively in jobs. Those factors are: 1) basic academic skills; 2) positive work orientation and attitudes; 3) job-related skills; 4) job-search skills; and 5) work experience. Although some research demonstrating the positive effect of previous work experience on subsequent employability is cited, the key issue for this paper is not whether but how work experience improves employability.

Part One. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

The paper begins with a speculative consideration of the ways in which work experience might affect later employability. It then reviews research literature from three sources: 1) economic studies of the relation between youth work experience and subsequent employment and earnings; 2) research on the effects of work experience on adolescent development; and 3) evaluation studies of employment and training programs. The next section briefly presents a radical critique of current educational programs. The final section of Part One proposes an ecological perspective to serve as a framework for recommendations on research and programs found in Part Two.

Work experience is defined as previous employment, but employers probably have implicit standards about how much employment qualifies a person as experienced. They also presumably have questions about applicants who have experience, especially whether they have proved to be good workers in the past and whether they have acquired relevant skills. Little research is available regarding what employers look for when hiring workers without advanced education and training.

Two processes are posited as linking work experience and employability: selection and preparation. The selection process includes self-selection of promising young workers into the labor market, employer selection of the best young workers, and the treatment of experience as a credential regardless of its validity. Preparation involves the learning,

socialization, or development young workers achieve on the job. These two processes are not mutually exclusive and, therefore, may be viewed as simultaneous and complementary. The issue is not which of the two is more powerful but how employment and training programs can be most effective in both ways.

Regarding the credentialing function of work experience, there is cause for concern that subsidized work experience may operate negatively since criteria for selecting workers into such programs are in some ways the opposite of those applied in the private sector. Subsidized work programs must pay special attention to their reputations among employers and to the kinds of documents they provide to participants as credentials. Such programs must also be designed to provide the best possible preparation for future employment.

Several recent analyses of National Longitudinal Study (NLS) data (Stephenson, 1979; Stevenson, 1978; Ellwood, 1979; Meyer and Wise, 1979) agree that youth employment has a continuing positive effect on earnings during young adulthood. There is less agreement regarding its influence on unemployment, in part because of differences between samples in whether work experience occurred during or after the completion of high school, and in part because of different methods of controlling for individual differences.

These authors and others establish some important themes regarding youth work experience. First, there are some fundamental differences between the youth and adult labor markets. Among other differences, unemployment has a different and less serious meaning for youth who are enrolled in school and/or who continue to live at home than it has for adults who are independent or heads of household. Second, although the overall youth unemployment rate is high, it appears to be a serious problem only for a relatively small group of youth who are disproportionately black and urban. The youth with the most serious unemployment problem are those who experience long periods of unemployment and frequently fail to finish high school. They have the worst employment prospects as adults. Third, for most young people, simply growing older reduces unemployment considerably. According to Bachman, O'Malley, and Johnston (1978), there is also a

convergence of work attitudes among young men in the mid-twenties toward increasing willingness to work hard in order to get a good job.

These studies establish that there is a positive relation between youth work experience and adult employability, but they do not tell us how that relation functions. The best source of information on that topic is the small body of literature on the effects of work experience on youth development, defined as the capacity of a person to understand and act upon the environment. Elder (1974) found that adolescents who worked to help support their families during the Great Depression acquired more adult-like attitudes and behavior then those who did not have this experience. However, theoretical treatments of adolescence by Erikson (1968) and Keniston (1971) suggest that there may be costs associated with precocious adulthood because of its interference with the adolescent "moratorium." Greenberger and Steinberg, in a series of preliminary reports on their extensive study of the effects of part-time work on the development of high school students, confirm the need for critical examination of the benefits of work to adolescents by demonstrating that extensive work interferes with school achievement and that most of the jobs youth hold teach them no marketable skills and require only the most basic academic skills. However, they also find that workers who do poorly in school gain some valuable practical skills from work, regardless of the number of hours employed, and they find evidence that working does not interfere with family or peer relations and may be a source of knowledge for youth about social relations. Andrisani et al. (1978) have found that workers with favorable employment experiences tend to see themselves as capable of controlling their own destinies, an attitude that makes them more likely to succeed in the labor market than workers who believe their fates are out of their own hands.

Evaluations of work experience programs provide another source of information about how experience and employability might be related, though there are some serious problems in trying to derive generalizations about such issues from studies done for evaluation purposes. Somers and Warlick (1975) use NLS data on youth participating

in a range of manpower programs and conclude that those who completed programs gained in earnings and stable employment. Goodwin's review of evaluation studies conclude that gains from such programs are often short-lived, probably because of conflicts between the attitudes and behavior they engender and those fostered by participants' peers. The conflict between those two assessments may result from Somers and Warlick's focus on program completers, who may have brought some of the qualities that made them more successful in the labor market to the programs rather than acquiring all of them there. Holloway's (1980) review of four dissertations examining the impact of employment programs on the self-concept and school performance of in-school youth finds little support for these kinds of change.

Walther (1976) and Mangum and Walsh (1978) have written the two most comprehensive and most valuable reviews of employment and training program evaluations. They are complementary and they reinforce some of the points found in the other studies reviewed. First, the benefits of work experience and the needs of youth to increase their employability appear not to be the acquisition of specific job-related skills but what Walther calls "coping skills." Second, there is agreement that simply putting disadvantaged youth into jobs and grouping large numbers of disadvantaged youth together in programs are ineffective strategies. Programs must reinforce work experience with supportive services to make it effective and they must be able to set realistic standards of performance to prepare youth for non-subsidized jobs. Low-income and minority youth who are both out of school and unemployed, Mangum and Walsh say, should be the principal target of employment and training programs.

Efforts to design and improve such programs must take into account the radical perspective on youth education and employment offered by such scholars as Bowles and Gintis (1976), Carnoy and Levin (1976) and Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1979). They point out that many programs are based on the assumption that the source of poverty is in the inadequacies of the poor and argue, in contrast, that poverty results directly from economic, political, and social structures. Our economy requires a large number of

unskilled workers and a pool of unemployed people from whom these workers can be drawn at low wages. These workers are all lower class and are disproportionately black. They tend to be the children of parents who were also low-level workers because such employment experience leads parents to inculcate in their children behavior and values appropriate to that level of the labor market. Evidence of the reality of a "dual labor market" in which jobs in the "secondary" sector do not lead to opportunities in the "primary" sector where high earnings and advancement possibilities exist supports this claim. This line of argument, when separated from the simple economic determinism that sometimes mars it, demands that programs set realistic goals that take into account powerful opposing forces and that people who are concerned about the employability of disadvantaged youth attend not only to how those youth may be changed but also to how the workplaces they will enter can be made more conducive to human development.

An ecological perspective reveals that an overwhelming amount of variation, among youth, and among different forms of work, both present and future, must be comprehended in order to understand how work experience affects employability. The ecological perspective also assumes reciprocal rather than one-way relations, so that work experience and employability are seen as affecting each other in a mutual interaction. More specifically, attention is recommended to the interactions among the workplace and the other settings in which youth are most often found: home, school, peer group(s), neighborhood, and voluntary organization(s). The consistency of the lessons learned in these different settings is an important question, particularly for disadvantaged youth, who are the critical group for policy purposes. Time is also a consideration, both personal time, which includes an individual's previous experiences, and future aspirations, that affect how he or she perceives what happens in a current setting, and historical time, which includes events and trends. All of these influences are likely to affect youth differently depending on their age, gender, race, class, ethnicity, location (urban, suburban, rural), and region of the country.

Part Two. Recommendations

A. Program Recommendations

1. "Coping skills" rather than specific job skills should be the objective of employment and training programs for low-income youth.
2. Staff must work diligently to assure that their programs enjoy good reputations among employers. This entails, first, having a program of high quality and, second, attending carefully to public relations.
3. Efficient and effective credentialing systems should be developed to record and report to employers participants' competencies.
4. Programs must establish and enforce clear and reasonable standards for participants' performance and behavior, even at the risk of excluding some youth most in need of help.
5. Supportive services should be provided to complement work experience.
6. Programs should offer a range of work experience placements that includes as prestigious and high paying jobs as possible, while recognizing that there are limits on the range of occupations for which participants can realistically compete. Unpaid work experience programs such as Experience-Based Career Education should be explored as models and experiements made with providing stipends to low-income youth for participating in such programs.
7. Systematic efforts should be made to involve parents and peers in employment and training programs so that they reinforce rather than compete with the programs' goals.
8. Programs should be targeted specifically at different levels of need within the low-income youth population.

B. Research Recommendations

1. Investigate how employers in different sectors of the labor market treat work experience in making hiring decisions.
2. Explore the transition of young workers without college degrees from the secondary (including subsidized) to the primary labor market, with special attention on the value of secondary labor market experience in the primary labor market.
3. Examine conflict and consistency among the work values and behavior fostered by home, school, workplace, peer group, neighborhood and voluntary organizations.
4. Conduct careful evaluations to monitor and assess the program recommendations offered above.
5. Evaluations should seek different ways in which programs are effective, not the one way. They should describe how effective programs function and how they became effective.

Part One: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Recent research has substantiated an assumption underlying programs designed to provide work experience for disadvantaged youth, namely that such experience has a beneficial effect on subsequent employability. But that research, tracing the employment and earnings records of a large sample of young people, does not establish how work experience affects employability. This paper addresses that issue by speculating on possible linking processes, reviewing research, and sketching a conceptual framework for future investigations.

Despite growing interest in improving the employability of disadvantaged youth, there is little empirical evidence regarding the processes by which young people enter employment, either from the perspective of how employers make hiring decisions or how prospective employees gain the qualities associated with successful employment. Therefore, this paper begins with a speculative consideration of ways in which youth work experience might affect later employability. Next research literature is reviewed including: economic studies of the effects of youth work experience on subsequent employment and earnings; research on the effects of work experience on adolescent development; and evaluation studies of employment and training programs. The argument of some radical critics of current educational and economic structures is summarized to reveal the assumption of many employment and training programs that the ultimate source of poor employability is in poor individuals, their families, and neighborhoods. Finally, an ecological perspective is introduced, which attempts to comprehend the great variation found among individuals, groups of people, and among workplaces and to relate these to social, economic, and political forces.

A. Work Experience and Employability

A Definition of Work Experience

At its simplest, work experience means previous employment. The contribution of unpaid experience to employability is an interesting question that will be addressed in Part Two. In Part One only paid work experience will be considered. From the employer's perspective, there is probably some minimum length of time on the job that qualifies as employment. Someone who spent less than a week on a particular job, for example, would probably not be treated as having work experience despite the fact that they had been on a payroll.

There are two additional issues that may be critical from the employer's perspective, beyond the fact of previous employment. One is whether previous employment establishes an applicant as a good worker. The second is whether that employment demonstrates the presence in the applicant of special skills related to the job to be filled. These two elements of work experience will be called respectively work record and related skills.

The second two elements become issues only for those job applicants who have previous work experience. The potential employer's consideration of an applicant, therefore, can be assumed to proceed from the fact of previous employment to the questions of whether the applicant has a good record and whether he or she has related skills. Evidence of a good work record would presumably come from two sources. One would be the number, types, and durations of previous jobs in connection with the applicant's age. A twenty-five-year-old with a history of short-term low-level jobs would probably be considered a poor risk, for example. The second would be letters of reference from previous employers. Evidence of related skills could also come from letters of reference and from the potential employer's knowledge of the kinds of skills required by the applicant's previous jobs.

A search for information about what employers actually look for when hiring young people for entry-level positions yielded surprisingly little evidence against which to test these suppositions. Most of the literature on personnel selection appears to be

for use by personnel managers who hire managerial employees. There is almost no empirical literature on what employers actually use as selection criteria when filling lower level jobs. Walther (1976) makes a compelling case that employers seek applicants with good "coping skills" such as planning, working with others, controlling impulses, using information, solving problems, and responding to authority. He claims that both workers and employers agree that these skills are far more important than specific task skills, which can easily be taught to workers with good coping skills. Lynton, Seldin, and Gruhin (1978) report and synthesize the work of several "task forces" of New York City employers and conclude that technical skills, while required in some jobs, are a secondary concern compared to basic literacy, problem-solving ability, interest in and commitment to a job and, in many cases, the ability and style required to deal with the public. Many employers stated their willingness and ability to train employees who meet these requirements in job-related skills.

Gloria Hamilton and David Roessner (1972) surveyed employers who hired participants in the Work Incentives (WIN) program and found that 26% required general work experience, 23% required specific work experience, 28% required job-specific training, and 50% required references. Although these percentages are difficult to interpret because of the unrepresentative nature of the sample and because the extent to which the same employers stated different requirements is unknown, they tend to confirm the claim that many employers do not require specific training or experience. It would be helpful to know what sources of reference are most respected by the employers who required references but not previous experience. Presumably teachers, community leaders, religious leaders, and family friends would be among the useful sources. How references from sources such as these would be evaluated compared to those from previous employers would have a strong bearing on how important previous work experience would be to an applicant.

How does work experience increase employability?

Explanations for the positive effect of youth work experience on employability can be placed in two categories: selection and preparation. Selection has to do with the process by which people get matched to jobs. Preparation is the impact that initial employment has on a young person's capacity to function effectively in future employment. Selection and preparation are not mutally exclusive categories. I assume they are both at work in the labor market.

Selection may be thought of as operating in three ways. Again these three are not mutually exclusive. There may be self selection, young people with the greatest commitment to working and the most favorable behavior seeking employment early and displaying those qualities that will continue to make them successful in the labor market in the future. Simultaneously, there may be employer selection of the best workers at an early age, accurately predicting who will be the best workers later in life. Third, the selection process may rely heavily on credentialing, whereby employers treat work experience as evidence of productivity and systematically prefer applicants who have it, resulting in higher levels of employment for those people whether or not they are actually better workers than inexperienced job-seekers.

Selection could also be described as sorting. The agent of the sorting process in self selection is the employee, while the employer does the sorting in employer selection. In both these cases, the sorting process is assumed to be a valid one, accurately identifying the good workers and separating them from the bad ones. Credentialing, as used here, sets aside the question of whether the sorting process is valid and posits an employer bias, rational or irrational, in favor of previously employed applicants. The result is the same: applicants are sorted and experienced applicants receive preference, but not necessarily because of their superior productivity.

The explanation based on preparation assumes that work experience does more than just sort people according to previously existing qualities, real or imagined. Work experience is seen as a learning experience that has lasting beneficial effects on young

people, equipping them to be more productive workers in the future. Work experience, following this line of explanation, is assumed to give the worker knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will make him or her a better worker than another applicant who was otherwise as well qualified but who has not yet been employed.

Another way to discuss the contributions of work experience to employability is in terms of the four competency areas identified as most important to employability: pre-employment knowledge, work maturity, educational skills, and occupational skills (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980, p. 7). Following the self selection and employer selection explanations, work experience might be said to constitute an indicator of the presence in a person of those four competencies at a level commensurate with favorable employment prospects. In line with credentialing, work experience is assumed by employers to indicate the presence in an applicant of work maturity, educational skills, and, if the previous experience was related, appropriate occupational skills. According to the preparation explanation, work experience improves one or more of the four competency areas making people more employable in the future because they gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for employment.

Given that these explanations are not mutually exclusive, there is little to be gained from asking whether one or another is the explanation, or even the best explanation. The most constructive treatment of the question is to allow that all the explanations contain some truth and then to ask what government-sponsored work experience programs for youth with poor employment prospects can do to enhance the employability of those youth most dramatically. Preparation and credentialing appear to be the most promising approaches.

This perspective suggests to me that work experience in the private sector and experience in the government-subsidized work programs may not have the same effects on employability. Subsidized work experience programs select participants on the basis of criteria that are functionally the opposite of those used in the private sector. Rather than setting up a competitive hiring procedure requiring individual initiative, and favoring

those who already demonstrate the greatest employability, such programs actively recruit those who are least employable. Experience in a government-subsidized work program does not demonstrate either self selection or employer selection. Employers may conclude on the basis of an applicant's experience in such a program that he or she is a less desirable employee than someone with no experience. It is certainly highly likely that employers would favor applicants with private sector work experience over those whose only previous employment had been in a government program. However, programs with a good reputation among employers in a community have a chance of providing youth with a valuable credential. (Walther, 1976, urges attention to this.) Programs that take seriously their credentialing function and provide participants with a specific and credible document attesting to their skill and reliability may also be more valuable in this respect.

The other way in which government-sponsored work experience programs can make people more employable, in addition to credentialing, is by having a strong, positive, and enduring impact on their work-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This is probably the most important means by which government programs can make people more employable. Even if their impact on preparation is not their most important contribution to participants' employability, subsidized work experience programs should be designed to provide participants with the best possible preparation for future employment.

Summary

What little evidence there is about how employers make hiring decisions suggests that, at least for entry-level jobs open to youth and young adults without college diplomas, general "coping skills" are far more important than specific occupational skills. Employers probably are concerned first about whether an applicant has had any experience, then about whether s/he has a strong work record and appropriate skills. Applicants for higher level jobs probably need to provide more information about what they did and how well they performed on previous jobs.

Two functions are hypothesized for work experience in determining employability: selection and preparation. Although selection includes both the self-selection of young

people into employment and the selection of workers by employers, the aspect of selection that subsidized work programs can most strongly affect is credentialing. Work programs can help to prepare youth for future employment by enhancing their pre-employment knowledge, work maturity,educational and occupational skills. Since both selection and preparation operate simultaneously, work experience programs should address both functions. The quality of a program is critical to its effectiveness in preparing youth for future employment, but its reputation among employers and its system for credentialing participants are critical to assisting participants in the selection process.

B. Research Regarding the Effects of Youth Work Experience on Employability

Four types of research are available that bear on the effects of youth work experience on subsequent employability: 1) surveys of employers' hiring practices; 2) economic studies of employment and earning records; 3) research on the developmental effects of work on youth; and 4) evaluations of work experience programs. Two surveys of employers' hiring practices (Hamilton and Roessner, 1972; Lynton, Seldin, and Gruhin, 1978) have already been cited. Because so little research has been in this area, it will not be discussed further.

Employment and Earnings in Relation to Youth Work Experience

The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) have provided a rich source of data for analyses of the long-term effects of early labor force experience because they follow the same young people from the late teens to the early twenties, the period of movement from full-time school enrollment to full-time work. Stephenson (1979) presents NLS data on young men indicating that "job holding in school reduces later unemployment for white and black youth. Furthermore, previous job holding, especially full-time job holding while a student, sharply increases hourly wage rates on post-school jobs" (p. 131). He finds that both the incidence and duration of adult unemployment are lower among youth who worked while enrolled in school.

Stevenson (1978), using NLS data on both men and women, finds that those who were out of school and unemployed as adolescents are the most likely to be unemployed as young adults (i.e., ages 23-26). He also claims that "after controlling for a number of personal characteristics, youth labor market status is seen to exert an impact of its own on subsequent experiences" (p. 94). Ellwood (1979), however, challenges this claim on the basis of his own analysis of NLS data, saying that the difference in adult unemployment results from individual differences ("heterogeneity") rather than youth labor market experience. Ellwood agrees with Stevenson that youth unemployment reduces wages earned over the following four years.

Meyer and Wise (1979), like Stevenson, examine NLS data on both males and females. They conclude that work experience during high school increases both hours worked and wages earned during the four years following graduation. Hours worked during the first year after graduation, according to their analysis, are not related to the number of hours worked in the remaining three years once individual differences are controlled for. They find a small effect of weeks worked during the first year after graduation on earnings in the subsequent three years, but this effect declines rapidly, with hours worked in each succeeding year being more important.

These analyses of the best data available establish with some confidence that youth labor market experience has effects on earnings that last into young adulthood. Furthermore, Meyer and Wise agree with Stephenson that employment while enrolled in school predicts lower unemployment and higher wages during young adulthood. The analyses point to the need to specify whether youth work experience is gained during school enrollment, following graduation from high school, or after dropping out of high school. Ellwood argues that unemployment during the first year following graduation from high school is not especially problematic. This does not, however, controvert Stevenson's claim that those who are both out of school and unemployed as adolescents are most likely to be unemployed as young adults.

These papers reinforce some major themes found in much of the recent literature on youth employment pertaining to the question of how work experience affects future

employability. First, the youth labor market is different in important respects from the adult labor market. As Barton (1976) points out, before about age 21 most young men seek and find positions demanding few skills, paying low wages, and offering few possibilities for advancement. These jobs are characterized by high turnover. In fact, the principal means of increasing income for people in these jobs appears to be moving from one job to another rather than receiving raises or promotions. High rates of youth unemployment, according to this view, reflect high "frictional" unemployment (i.e., unemployment resulting from job changes) rather than a serious "structural" problem. Furthermore, official unemployment rates are complicated by the ambiguous labor force status of students, who move easily from "not in the labor force" to employment, and back out of the labor force (Feldstein and Ellwood, 1979).

Second, the truly serious youth unemployment problem is concentrated in a relatively small group that is disproportionately but not predominantly black and urban. These youth, in contrast to most, experience long periods of unemployment. They are very likely to have dropped out of high school. Feldstein and Ellwood make these points based on an analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS) data collected in October, 1976:

> Unemployment is not a serious problem for the vast majority of teenage boys. Less than 5 percent of teenage boys are unemployed, out of school, and looking for full-time work. Many out of school teenagers are neither working nor looking for work and most of these report no desire to work. Virtually all teenagers who are out of work live at home. Among those who do seek work, unemployment spells tend to be quite short; over half end within one month when these boys find work or stop looking for work. Nonetheless, much of the total amount of unemployment is the result of quite long spells among a small portion of those who experience unemployment during the year.
>
> Although nonwhites have considerably higher unemployment rates than whites, the overwhelming majority of the teenage unemployed are white. Approximately half of the difference between the unemployment rates of whites and blacks can be accounted for by other demographic and economic differences.
>
> There is a small group of relatively poorly educated teenagers for whom unemployment does seem to

> be a serious and persistent problem. This group suffers much of the teenage unemployment. Although their unemployment rate improves markedly as they move into their twenties, it remains very high relative to the unemployment rate of better educated and more able young men (p. 4).

One qualification should be appended to this rather optimistic interpretation. CPS data come from household surveys, which undersample unemployed teenagers who do not live at home, who may add to the number of chronically unemployed.

A third theme running through several writers' work is that employment stability improves with age. From about age 25 to 65, employment histories tend to be stable, spells of unemployment are relatively short on the average, and all but a small percentage of male heads of households are consistently employed. Bachman, O'Malley, and Johnston (1978) find in their long-term longitudinal sample that increasing age and marriage are associated with more stable employment. Furthermore, they also find increasingly convergent responses to attitude questions related to employment. Whereas at high school graduation there had been a tendency for those with low status jobs and low educational attainment to profess their desire not to get dirty or work hard or take responsibility in their jobs, five years later "nearly everyone wanted a good job and seemed willing to work hard if that is what the job required" (p. 165). The authors are unable to establish the cause of this change, though they note that marriage is independently associated with this same attitude change (p. 167). They speculate that work experience may increase young men's willingness to work hard and take responsibility in order to get and hold a good job.

Accepting the reality of a distinct youth labor market, as described by Barton, many writers, notably Mangum and Walsh (1978), have stated another theme, that concern about youth facing "dead-end jobs" is misplaced. Nearly all the jobs open to youth are "dead-end" in the sense that they do not offer a clear career ladder. These jobs are primarily a source of income and experience. Moving frequently from one such job to another is a means of gaining work experience and labor market information, in this view.

The assumption that there exist two distinct labor markets, a primary one in which career ladders, escalating earnings, and advanced skills are found, and a secondary one in which little advancement is possible, few skills are required, and earnings hover around the minimum wage, raises another set of concerns about work experience, especially for the highly disadvantaged group of youth who experience the greatest unemployment as adults. One way of describing the adult experience of that group is to say that they have failed to break into the primary labor market and continue to experience as adults conditions that most people left behind after their early twenties: frequent moves among low-skill, low-paying jobs with periods of unemployment intervening. (For further information on "segmented" labor markets, see Gordon, 1972; see Harrison, 1972, for a discussion of a tertiary or "irregular" labor market of illegal activities that is a further consideration especially in central cities.)

If there are, in fact, two labor markets that are relatively discontinuous, and if youth are restricted to the secondary labor market, then the question must be asked whether youth work experience has the same effects in the primary labor market as it has in the secondary labor market. Does youth work experience serve as well and does it serve the same functions for the young woman entering a career in management as for the young man seeking employment as a laborer?

Unfortunately these studies of employment and earnings, as important and useful as they are, do not shed much light on the process by which work experience affects employability. Although they demonstrate that youth work experience does have an effect, they do not support inferences regarding how that effect occurs. One might speculate, for example, that it is not so much work experience as the absence of unemployment that makes a difference. If this were true - that work experience functions primarily as an alternative to youth unemployment, which is what actually causes lower earnings later on - then the job-creation function of subsidized employment would be adequate, regardless of the types of jobs and the learning gained from those jobs. Research on the impact of work experience on adolescent development might better illuminate the processes through which experience affects employability.

Research Regarding the Effects of Work Experience on Adolescent Development*

Development as it is used here is a broad term referring to the growing capacity of an individual to understand and act upon his or her environment. (See Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27.) This definition subsumes two other terms that, at their broadest, might be used instead: learning and socialization. Although learning most often refers to cognitive knowledge and skills, defined broadly it also includes attitude change and understanding, making it almost the same as development. Socialization refers primarily to the acquisition of social norms and the adoption of behavior appropriate to specific social units. If this process is viewed as continuing beyond childhood and related to an ever-widening social world, then it too comes close to development. One advantage to using the term, development, is that it implies more clearly than the others a dynamic interaction between biologically and environmentally determined aspects of growth.

It is not always easy to identify those changes that qualify as developmental in the sense that they increase a person's capacity to understand and act upon the environment. Two touchstones are: 1) that changes persist across time and settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 35); and 2) that changes increase a person's openness to further development (Dewey, 1938, p. 36).

Among the benefits of youth work experience posited by the Work-Education Consortium of the National Manpower Institute (1978, pp. 3-4) are the preparation of youth for adulthood, especially by teaching independence and responsibility. If adulthood is defined as the stage of life when one is capable of living apart from parents and caring for and providing for others, it is difficult to argue against the need for independent and responsible attitudes and behavior in adults. Youth, therefore, ought to gain progressively in these qualities. What evidence is there that work experience contributes to these aspects of development?

*For a more extensive treatment of this topic, see Hamilton and Crouter (1980), from which some passages of this section are taken.

The most impressive evidence in support of work as a positive influence on development comes from Elder's research on Children of the Great Depression (1974). Elder analyzed an extensive longitudinal data set on a cohort of individuals who were adolescents during the Depression and lived in Oakland, California. One consequence of the economic instability of that period was reflected in what Elder calls the "downward extension of adultlike experience" for those adolescents:

> For the Oakland children, economic deprivation in the 30's increased the common involvement of mother and daughter in the household operations, and encouraged economic activity which placed the boys in a responsible position to nonfamily employers (p. 81).

What were the effects of this early employment on the adolescents? In Elder's words:

> Boys and girls who were employed showed a much greater interest in adults and spent more time with them in school-related activities than other children...Economic hardship and jobs increased their desire to associate with adults, to "grow up" and become adult. This adult orientation is congruent with other behavioral correlates of roles in the household economy, including the responsible use of money...energetic or industrious behavior, dependability and domesticity among girls, and social independence of boys (pp. 81-82).

Elder's study provides strong empirical support to the belief that work experience enhances independence and responsibility in adolescents. Caution must be observed, however, before applying his findings to contemporary adolescents because we cannot be sure that work experience today would have the same effects it did during the Great Depression when working adolescents made essential contributions to their families' well being.

Two criticisms of the idea that adolescents need to have more work experience are based on theoretical grounds and require careful attention to differences among adolescents and the conditions of work in order to sharpen them. One is that most workplaces are alienating rather than fulfilling. Under the provocative title, "School Is Bad; Work is Worse," Behn, et al. (1974) attack the Panel on Youth (1974) report for portraying

the workplace as an arena for creativity and growth. They cite the Work in America report (1973) and other sources to argue that a major problem in the United States today is the boredom and dehumanization suffered by workers and then sensibly ask what gains are to be expected from exposing young people to such conditions. They also argue that existing agents of socialization, particularly the schools, do an excellent job of socializing adolescents for adulthood; what is wrong is that available adult roles are stratified by class and are predominantly unrewarding. The need, they say, is not for changes in the socialization of adolescents but changes in the treatment of adults in the workplace. Such changes, they claim, will automatically yield changes in socialization processes.

A second criticism is rooted in the theoretical treatment of adolescence by Erikson (1968), elaborated by Keniston (1971). They portray adolescence and youth as periods of "moratorium" from adult responsibility. Erikson views the adolescent moratorium as a time of identity formation. Premature adult responsibilities, he suggests, can result in identity foreclosure because they restrict opportunities for exploration and testing. Keniston points out that many privileged college students continue their psychosocial moratorium well past the period of identity formation and argues that they use this time to resolve tensions between self and society in ways that may prove more fruitful than the conventional ones employed by the less privileged. If Erikson and Keniston are correct, the expansion of work demands into the life stages of adolescence and youth could limit individual development and, in the long run, hinder societal adaptation to changing circumstances.

These two lines of criticism do not negate the value of work experience for adolescents, but they identify some limits to that value. While it may be true, as the Panel on Youth asserts, that even "humdrum" work can be a good experience for adolescents, its value surely cannot lie in introducing young people a year or two earlier to their unhappy fate in life. Uninspiring work might make young people strive harder to achieve a higher occupational level, which can be personally rewarding but does nothing to improve the

life chances of that proportion of the work force that is relegated to those jobs. Boring work might also contribute to adolescents' sense of worth because at least it is a source of earnings and an indication that someone needs them. But the contribution of routine work experience to adolescent development is sure to vary depending on each adolescent's past and future. It will be very different if it occurs in the context of other more inspiring work experiences or on the ladder of social mobility than if it is a persistent experience and one that is likely to continue indefinitely.

The notion of adolescence as a "moratorium" alerts us first that there might be such a thing as too much work experience during adolescence and second that reports by Elder and others that work experience makes adolescents more like adults should not be welcomed uncritically. The reality of exploitative child labor around the world (Loke, 1979) reinforces the fact that freedom from work responsibilities is a rare privilege of contemporary adolescents; indeed, this freedom defines adolescence as a nonuniversal stage of life. We agree with those who claim that the balance has shifted too far and that more work opportunities should be open to most young people but a massive shift in the opposite direction might be hazardous. The challenge is to create optimal conditions for development toward adulthood, not to require precocious adult behavior and attitudes of adolescents. The research we now have to draw on is inadequate to the task of determining those optimal conditions.

Andrisani and his associates (1978) have exploited the NLS data base to study the relations between work experience and attitudes. Although attitude change is not the same thing as development, it can be taken as an indicator of development. Andrisani has been especially interested in Rotter's (1966) concept of internal versus external control. Rotter's scale is used to measure the extent to which people see themselves as in control of their life conditions. Those who score high on the internal side of the continuum see their destinies as highly related to their own initiative. Those on the external side believe the actions of other people and chance are the most important forces in their lives. Andrisani presents Gurin and Gurin's (1970) hypothesis that Rotter's

measure actually has two components, one of which refers to people in general, the other to the respondent specifically. Andrisani's analysis of the NLS data strongly supports this hypothesis and suggests that people's beliefs about how much control they have over their own lives are more useful in predicting their behavior than their beliefs about the control exercised by people in general.

Since the Rotter scale was administered to subjects in the NLS sample at different times and data are available about their employment situations at different times as well, Andrisani was able to examine both the impact of internal versus external orientation on future work experience and the impact of work experience on changes in that orientation. He finds that "internals," tend to gain more in earnings and to be more likely to advance in their occupations. For young men especially, the critical aspect was the perception of the effects of subjects' <u>own</u> initiative rather than of initiative displayed by people in general. Furthermore, the use of only the four Rotter scale items referring to the subject specifically, which Andrisani calls the "personal-control factor," yielded similar findings for white and black young men, while the inclusion of items referring to the effects of initiative displayed by people in general, the "control ideology factor," yielded differences between the black and white sub-samples. Andrisani concludes that the "personal-control factor" is closer to Rotter's conception of internal-external attitudes than the scale take as a whole, which is what Gurin and Gurin proposed.

Analyzing changes in internal-external attitudes among the sub-sample of middle-aged men, Andrisani finds some changes associated with different experiences in the labor force, though again the "personal-control factor" was more important, showing greater propensity to change than "control ideology." As expected, those experiencing greater success in terms of occupational mobility and earnings tended to become more internal and vice-versa. There was also, however, considerable variation related to background variables such as marital status, schooling, and place of residence, giving grounds for caution about the independent effects of work experience on internal-external attitudes. Assuming that such attitude change would be more difficult to achieve in middle-aged

men than in younger people, Andrisani finds reason for hope that positive work experience can have a positive influence on people's sense of control over their destinies, which can in turn contribute to greater success in the labor market.

Ellen Greenberger and Laurence Steinberg are currently engaged in the most extensive investigation of the effects of work on youth development. They are specifically interested in part-time work of high school students. Their sample, selected from four Orange County, California high schools, excludes most of those youth whose employment future is bleakest, but their initial reports provide a great deal of information about the first work experience of a wide range of young people and its effects on them. (See also Cole, 1980.) Future reports promise even more insights. Their study focuses on development, utilizes many measures, and has a longitudinal design incorporating comparisons among workers, non-workers, and job-seekers. Some of the measures they use, such as grade point average, are not developmental by themselves but in the context of the study as a whole they serve as indicators of development.

One analysis (Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, and McAuliffe, 1980) examines the effects of working on grade point averages (GPA). They found that whether a student was employed was not related to GPA when other variables were controlled. However, the number of hours worked per week did have an inverse relation to GPA above a certain number: more than 14 hours for 10th graders and 19 hours for 11th graders. This appears to be congruent with Stromsdorfer's finding of a "curvilinear relationship between hours worked and indices of educational performance....performance increased as hours worked increased until a point of diminishing returns was reached" (1973, p. 68). Although they have not yet analyzed their longitudinal data to confirm that this association follows from employment rather than preceding it, Steinberg et al. provide evidence for the causal effect of employment by demonstrating that, among those not employed, job-seekers and non-seekers do not differ in GPA.

Results of a test of practical knowledge reported in the same paper are also useful. Employed students performed better on the test than those who were not employed,

while job-seekers performed no better than non-seekers. Unlike the effect of employment on GPA, this effect is independent of hours worked. Furthermore, it was found only among workers with low GPA's. Taken together, these findings suggest: 1) that part-time work experience while enrolled in high school may enhance the practical knowledge of low-achieving students without reducing their GPA's unless hours worked become excessive; and 2) that the number of hours constituting excessive work increases with age.

Another paper (Greenberger, Steinberg, Vaux, and McAuliffe, 1980) reports findings from questionnaires on the impact of employment on family and peer relations. This analysis suggests that working reduces the time young people spend with their families but not the quality of those relations, nor does working substantially increase young people's autonomy in spending or other matters. Neither time spent with peers nor the quality of peer relations appear to suffer from employment. The authors promise a future report on their analysis of interviews, which suggests that although work does not have much impact on day-to-day relations with family and peers, it is a source of learning about how people relate to each other and, therefore, may have long-term effects on the development of social relations.

Greenberger and Steinberg have also collected observational data on what young people actually do at their jobs. Their findings from observations of 91 youth for an average time of almost two hours strongly support their initial hypothesis that youth work is highly differentiated rather than the uniform experience it is often assumed to be. Variation was found along the following dimensions: rate of social interaction, rate of interaction with adults, rate of interaction and time spent with peers, initiative displayed, time spent exercising school-related skills (reading, writing, and doing arithmetic), routinization of work, time pressure, and frequency of accidents and injuries.

Although there were also dimensions on which no differences were found, the weight of their evidence challenges optimistic assumptions about the learning opportunities provided by work. The two activities that accounted for the greatest amount of time

were cleaning and carrying. The authors note, "adolescents' first jobs seem to be ones in which they perform in a new setting activities that they already have learned to perform in other settings" (Greenberger, Steinberg, and Ruggiero, 1980).

In summary, although the evidence is far from complete, there are indications of both positive and negative effects of youth employment on development. However, the negative effects appear to result from too much work, when the amount of time and energy required by work interferes with schooling. The positive effects can best be characterized as general. There is little evidence that very many youth work experiences teach specific job skills or prepare youth for particular careers. However, the experience of working probably does contribute to a greater sense of independence and responsiblity and may lead to other desirable attitudes that are developmental in the sense that they will serve most youth well in the future. The effects of work experience on development are not uniform; they depend on other factors such as the nature of the workplace, the amount of time required and, presumably, other variables as well.

Work Experience Program Evaluations

Using reports of program evaluations as a basis for generalizations is a tricky business. There are several difficulties, which flow both from the limitations of social science and from the nature of evaluation research. Scriven (1980) is only one of many commentators who has noted the inappropriateness of the transfer to social science of assumptions and methods from the physical sciences. He boldly suggests that learning and most other aspects of human behavior are much more random than orderly and therefore are highly resistant to accurate description, much less prediction. Furthermore, within the realm of social science, evaluation and policy research have a different role to play from what Coleman (1972) calls "discipline research," and that role constrains its value for generalization.

The fact that users of evaluation research are most interested in evidence regarding program effects limits the utility of evaluation studies. It is surely essential to gain

some indications of whether a program is accomplishing anything, but a narrow focus on outcomes alone is hazardous in at least three ways. First, great effort can be expended on "the evaluation of non-events," searches for the effects of programs that were never implemented. Second, the most obvious effects to seek are those stated as objectives of the program, but it may well be that the strongest and most important effects of a program are unstated and possibly unintended. Undesirable effects that are not examined might outweigh positive effects. Third, the allocation of all or most evaluation resources to the measurement of effects can leave processes unexplored. Hence, if positive effects are found, their specific causes remain unknown, making replication difficult.

When a conventional evaluation study finds no statistically significant changes in participants, at least five hypotheses can be posited: 1) the program may be ineffective; 2) the instruments used to measure changes may be insensitive to real changes that took place; 3) the changes that took place may not have been tested by the measures used; 4) the program's effects might not be apparent for months or years after the final measures were taken; 5) or a variety of different changes may have taken place in different participants but they were obscured by the aggregation of data. Design flaws frequently make it impossible to rule out these competing explanations so the finding of no change remains ambiguous.

A serious weakness of many evaluation studies, especially those following psychological paradigms, is reliance on paper-and-pencil meaures. Important personal qualities are identified as possible program outcomes -- improved self-concept is a common example. But those qualities are operationalized in terms of responses to a printed inventory. A shift in the mean scores of participants toward the upper level is then taken as evidence that self-concepts have improved, but the relation between the way participants mark their inventories and the way they lead their lives remains open to serious question. (See Hamilton, 1980, for a more extensive critique of paper-and-pencil measures.)

Another major difficulty in generalizing from evaluation studies is that participants in evaluated programs are often not comparable to each other or to the population of

interest. For example, an evaluation of a work experience program for school drop-outs in an economically expanding city may provide no information of use in planning a program for in-school minority youth in a depressed rural area.

These reservations do not mean that program evaluations are useless. On the contrary, evaluations provide the best information available about how the employability of young people can be directly improved. However, for the purpose of making policy-related generalizations, evaluations are much more useful in the aggregate than one-at-a-time. The findings of any one study must be checked against those of other studies before well-founded generalizations can be proposed. In keeping with this principle, the following treatment of evaluation studies will rely heavily on previously-published reviews rather than on individual reports.

Somers and Warlick (1975, summarized in Barton and Fraser, 1978, pp. 94-95) used NLS data to conduct an unusual evaluation. They matched social security numbers of NLS subjects with those recorded in Manpower Administration programs to trace the employment and earnings reported for social security purposes of participants in a range of programs and to secure a sample of young men who were not enrolled in any program. Regression analyses showed higher earnings for nonenrollees, but enrollees who completed programs had an advantage over both nonenrollees and noncompleters. The advantage of program participation peaked three years after completion, but persisted beyond that time. Findings were clearest for those completing programs between 1966 and 1969. For more recent participants, sample size and short time since completion complicate analysis.

In a very useful examination of some social psychological aspects of employment for poor youth, Goodwin (1980) briefly summarizes the findings of several studies of the impact of work experience programs on the subsequent employment of poor youth as follows:

> When certain kinds of training and work programs are established for poor youth, their work effort increases markedly. This was seen in the Supported Work demonstration in several cities, the Residential

> Youth Center in New Haven, and the WIN program across fourteen different sites. This spurt in work activity, however, tends to decrease over time as the youths leave the program and have to make their way in the regular labor market. Major questions are: Why does the increase in work activity occur, and why does the decrease follow? (p. 346).

Goodwin proposes that an effective work program increases participants' sense of efficacy (similar to Rotter's internal control) and worth and that these orientations lead to an expectation of economic independence, which increases work effort. This would account for increased employment following a program. The later decline may result, according to Goodwin, from either discouraging labor market experience or negative peer group influence or both. He recommends that program evaluations in the future attend not only to whether programs work but how they work, taking into account the reciprocal effects of participants' experience and orientations or attitudes.

Both Goodwin and Somers and Warlick examined programs aimed at low-income youth. Somers and Warlick took a longer-term view and lumped programs together to arrive at a positive assessment of their continuing effect on employment and earnings. Their separation of program participants into completers and non-completers may account for the discrepancy between their conclusion and Goodwin's, but it is fair to ask whether the difference between completers and non-completers predated the programs. Program completion may simply indicate the presence of positive work orientation, determination, and higher employment aspirations that are responsible for later labor market success. Goodwin's plea for more attention to how programs work is well-founded.

Holloway (1980) reviews four dissertations on the effects of work experience programs on youth self-concept and academic achievement. The only study reporting increased self-concept among high school students participating in work experience programs used a post-test only design and self-selected treatment and comparison groups, making the attribution of this difference to program effects highly suspect. An experimental Neighborhood Youth Corps program in which one group of low-income minority studies were paid for working, another participated in a motivational program, a combined treatment

group received both work and the motivational program, and a control group received no treatment, resulted in improved grades for both the work and combined programs and in improved attitudes toward school in the motivation and combined programs, but no changes in self-concept, reported disciplinary incidents, or achievement test scores in any program.

On the basis of his review, which also included a preliminary report from Greenberger and Steinberg (see above), Holloway concludes that there is little basis for expecting work experience programs to improve the development or the employment prospects of in-school youth. He argues instead for targeting work programs on out-of-school youth and encouraging low-income and minority youth to remain in school, by means of direct income transfer or student loans, if necessary. Holloway claims that educational attainment is a better predictor of employment and earnings than work experience while in school and warns that work experience programs may interfere with rather than promote the acquisition of educational credentials.

The two most comprehensive and most valuable reviews of youth employment program evaluations are by Walther (1976) and Mangum and Walsh (1978). Walther derives generalizations and recommendations from a multitude of program evaluation reports and concludes, in part, that the goal of training youth in specific job-related skills is inappropriate both because there is little evidence that training programs succeed in teaching such skills and because employers are able and willing to provide such training to employees who come to them with basic academic skills and positive work orientation and behavior. Walther proposes instead that programs stress "coping skills:" self-management, abstract thinking ability, effective problem solving, frame of reference flexibility, ability to reconcile conflicting demands, ability to reconcile conflicts of interest, adaptiveness to authority, control of aggression, ability to process information, and good interpersonal relations (pp. 66-69). According to Walther,

> Coping skills are more basic (than specific task skills) in the performance of work, govern a person's performance over a longer period of time and over a wider range

> of circumstances. If an individual has adequate coping skills, he can ...learn the specific skills required for most jobs. On the other hand, without adequate coping skills, he is likely to fail on the job even if his specific job skills are adequate (p. 65).

Unfortunately, Walther offers no direct evidence that work experience contributes to the acquisition of "coping skills." Nonetheless, his recommendations seem sound.

Mangum and Walsh (1978) review over 300 books, reports, and papers on employment and training programs for youth to develop a statement on "what works best for whom." They include vocational education and classroom training programs, but most of the programs incorporate some work experience. (Their definition of work experience, it should be noted, is narrower than that used here. They define work experience as "jobs designed to provide enrollees with good work habits, experience in working with others, and performing in a supervised situation" p. 3; see also p. 52.) They make extensive use of Walther's synthesis. Every chapter of this report concludes with implications for the design of programs, drawn from the literature reviewed. The recommendations seem firmly grounded in the literature and useful to program operators.

Like Holloway, Mangum and Walsh recommend that high school drop-outs and over-18-year-old youth should be the sole targets for work experience programs. They find little evidence of effectiveness in reports on work experience programs for in-school youth. "The overwhelming conclusion of existing literature is that neither in-school nor summer work experience programs in the traditional mold have long-term beneficial effects on enrollees" (p. 56). Their recommendation, based on more favorable findings regarding programs for out-of-school youth, is "for those of high school age, largely ignoring all but the drop-out or the drop-out prone" (p. 178).

Agreeing with Walther that work experience alone has not proved effective, Mangum and Walsh also recommend that work experience be augmented with supportive services, especially placement. Also drawing on Walther, they propose that "coping skills" rather than specific job skills be the major emphasis of employment and training programs.

Mangum and Walsh strongly criticize those programs that have drawn together large numbers of youth who are poorly prepared for employment and then have allowed

the negative attitudes and behaviors of some participants to undermine the morale and commitment of the others.

> The evidence of seventeen years of research and evaluation indicates that whenever the hard core disadvantaged were segregated in any program, failure was almost inevitable. Not only did programs lose prestige in the eyes of employers and staff lose confidence in the effectiveness of the programs they were administering, the enrollees were denied the benefits and challenges inherent in mixing and competing with more motivated enrollees (p. 58).

They conclude that programs must engage youth in work the youth perceive as providing conditions in which they are held accountable for their behavior. "Make work" programs and programs in which all participants are rewarded equally regardless of their performance are dysfunctional. Therefore, despite the paradox, which the authors recognize, of making programs for the disadvantaged selective, they recommend that programs must be able to dismiss participants who are unwilling or unable to perform satisfactorily. The authors present supported work programs as an example of how seriously disadvantaged enrollees can be assisted by programs designed specifically to overcome those disadvantages (pp. 66-72).

Concluding their chapter on subsidized employment programs, the authors note the critical importance of developing credibility with employers.

> Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from the past is that subsidized employment programs for youth - in order to reach their maximum potential - must gain the respect of employers, both public and private, and the community in general. In order for this to occur, standards must be maintained and an atmosphere of overall program success must be achieved (p. 75).

Although the quality of the program is clearly the most important determinant of its reputation, a certain amount of public relations work is required to secure widespread recognition of a high quality program. In addition, the participants in the program require convincing documentation of their successful participation if the program-sponsored work experience is to function as a valuable credential in future job-seeking (p. 174).

Both Walther and Mangum and Walsh deal with the thorny issue of how the attitudes and behavior fostered by poverty and discrimination reduce the employability of youth. Walther (pp. 59-60) discusses the useful notion of "competing competencies." He points out that many of the behaviors that are valued and rewarded in low-income and minority subcultures and in the irregular economy are hindrances to employment in the regular economy. Therefore, youth are in effect faced with a choice of which set of behaviors to adopt. Selecting one set effectively isolates them, in most cases, from achievement in the other system. Mangum and Walsh (especially pp. 27-34) consider the self-perpetuating nature of poverty, pointing out that parents who are marginally attached to the labor force are unable to socialize their children properly for success in the labor market.

This issue is thorny because it is easy to "blame the victim," by implying that the ultimate source of poverty is in the personal qualities of the poor (Ryan, 1976). Neither review explicitly adopts this perspective, but both convey what might be described as a chastened liberal tone. They recognize that poor employment prospects result from a host of forces and that employment and training programs simply cannot alter many of those forces. Mangum and Walsh recommend concentrating resources on those disadvantaged youth who both need and can respond to help, accepting the fact that some cannot be helped. (This perspective is elaborated in Part Two in connection with Trow's typology of youth as presented by the Carnegie Council, 1979.)

Summary of Research

Longitudinal research has demonstrated that youth work experience is associated with subsequent employment in the expected manner. Those who are unemployed as youth are the most likely to be unemployed as young adults, even after such background variables as family income, educational attainment, and race have been controlled. These studies do not reveal, however, the nature of the link between youth work experience and adult employability. It would be particularly helpful to know whether it is the positive effect of having been employed that makes a difference or just the avoidance of the negative consequences of frequent and persistent unemployment in youth.

There is some evidence for the positive effects of work experience in a few studies of the impact of work on adolescent development, which indicates that work experience can help to prepare youth for future employment. This evidence must be considered in the light of evidence that most of the jobs young people do are not very good learning opportunities and that employment can interfere with school achievement. It is probably most useful to think of having a job as a first step, an improvement over unemployment, and having a good job, in terms of its contribution to learning and development, as a second step toward employability.

Despite the limitations of evaluation research, critical reviews of employment and training programs for youth, especially those by Walther (1976) and Mangum and Walsh (1978), are rich sources of information about how to improve the employability of youth. The following are some of the generalizations derived from those reviews that are most pertinent to the issues addressed in this paper: 1. "Coping skills" (pre-employment knowledge, work maturity, and educational skills) are more important than specific occupational skills to employers; 2. Programs must establish and maintain reasonably high standards for participants' performance, attendance, and deportment, even at the risk of having to reject some of the people most in need of assistance, in order to avoid undermining the morale and interfering with the progress of the majority of participants; 3. Program quality must also be visible to the community as a whole in order to establish credibility with prospective employers; 4. High school drop-outs and over eighteen-year-olds are most in need of assistance and most responsive to programs and therefore should be the prime target group; 5. Work experience must be supplemented with supportive services such as counseling and classroom instruction in order to improve the employment prospects of disadvantaged youth; 6. Employment and training programs have to compete with strong opposing influences to change the work attitudes and behavior of disadvantaged youth.

Overall, the research evidence indicates that youth with the worst employment prospects are a relatively small proportion of all youth, and that work experience can

enhance their employability both by improving their employment knowledge, skills, and attitudes and by giving them useful credentials. Programs aimed at this group, however, must be carefully planned and implemented to be effective. The next section provides some cautions to this optimistic interpretation based on a different set of assumptions about occupational attainment in the United States' economy.

C. Radical Perspectives on Youth Education and Employment

Bowles and Gintis (1976), Carnoy and Levin (1976), and Ogbu (1974, 1978) present a radical view of the educational and employment experiences of disadvantaged youth. The implications of this view must be considered by those who hope to improve the employability of disadvantaged youth. In brief, all three argue that poverty cannot be eliminated by adjusting the educational system because poverty is an inevitable consequence of current economic and political conditions.

Bowles and Gintis, Carnoy and Levin take a neo-Marxian view of education and status attainment. They propound the "correspondence principle," which states that the social relations of work are reproduced in the social relations of the school, thus providing preliminary socialization of potential workers into the type of behavior expected of them in the segment of the labor market to which their family's socio-economic status consigns them. Upper middle class children, for example, are encouraged to be creative and independent just as their parents' jobs demand those qualities. Lower class children, in contrast, are trained to be compliant. The differences between the open suburban school and the rigid working class school, according to this view, result from differences in parental values that reflect their own experience in the workplace as well as from the expectations of school personnel and community decision makers that the schools will prepare children for different roles in the labor market.

These writers (See, for example, Bowles and Gintis, p. 101.) look at the economic system and see a rigid hierarchy rather than a freely competitive system that rewards individual merit. They see a conflict between the educational system's function in promoting

equality and human development on one hand and its function in assigning individuals to a place in the socio-economic hierarchy on the other because that hierarchy tends to persist from generation to generation. They argue that schooling is controlled by the wealthy to assure a supply of compliant workers. Contrary to more mainstream critics of schooling, they claim that schools prepare students quite well for work life. The problems are that the economic system is highly unequal, that this inequality is passed on from parents to children, and that for many work life is grindingly dreary.

Ogbu is sympathetic with these arguments but is more concerned with race than with class. He interprets the condition of blacks and some other minority groups in the United States as evidence of a caste system, which offers even less hope of social mobility than a class system. Under these conditions, in which a "job ceiling" operates to keep all but a few blacks out of high status and high paying jobs, he says that poor school performance and negative work orientations are functional adaptations to reality rather than pathological aberrations.

This line of argument depends heavily on the claim that status -- educational level, occupational status, and earnings being the key indicators -- is determined more by race and by the socio-economic status of one's family than by any other factors. Adult status, that is, is more "inherited" (figuratively, not genetically) than achieved. The kinds of things individuals can do for themselves to raise their status -- attend school and work diligently at their job in hopes of advancement for example -- are seen as weak influences by themselves and highly related to family background anyway. These critics challenge the assumptions that our society's hierarchy reflects real and functional differences among people and that it is a fluid one in which people move up and down according to their merit. Ogbu (1979; see also Bullock, 1973) stresses that perceptions of the "opportunity structure" influence young people's behavior and aspirations both directly, as they learn about what their employment prospects are, and indirectly through parental practices that socialize them for the social and economic milieu that the parents live in and that their children will most likely remain in rather than a higher status milieu

that they are highly unlikely to enter. Ogbu presents convincing data demonstrating that the perception of a limited opportunity structure for poor blacks is accurate and argues that only a real change in that structure will make it rational for such youth to strive for academic achievement and stable employment.

These arguments can be separated into two components: the radical "facts" (as with all facts, riddled with assumptions and dependent upon interpretation) and radical implications. The radical "facts" may be accepted whole or in part without accepting the radical implication that the only alternative is wholesale change. It is possible, that is, to agree that educational and other social institutions reproduce social relations that are fostered by current economic institutions without concluding that the only route to equality is complete reconstruction of economic institutions. Bowles and Gintis, Carnoy and Levin, in fact conclude with pleas for industrial democracy, not revolution. Ogbu merely argues for the racial equality that is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

The principal implication of the radical perspective for efforts to enhance the employability of youth is that the most effective means would be to make more equally available attractive and rewarding employment opportunities and to increase the total number of such jobs by improving the quality of worklife. Programs aimed at changing individuals, in this view, are doomed to failure because they intervene at a non-determining point -- individual behavior -- rather than by altering the opportunity structure so that "coping skills" become more rewarding than "street skills." They may give certain members of disadvantaged groups a competitive advantage over other members, but the same proportion of people will remain unemployed and the same proportion of jobs will continue to demand few skills and no initiative.

Returning to the two functions of work experience posited above, selection and preparation, we may describe the radical perspective as being most concerned with selection or the sorting process by which some people are employed in prestigious high-paying jobs, others in undesirable low-paying jobs, and still others are mostly unemployed. Most employment and training programs accept this process and work on preparing people

to fit into more desirable and more rewarding slots than they could otherwise fill. The radical perspective warns that this may be nothing more than moving people around at the bottom of the ladder as long as the barriers to climbing the ladder are so strong and the rewards at the bottom are so far inferior to those at the top. There is a danger that such programs simply reallocate a fixed amount of unemployment rather than reduce overall unemployment.

Another way to distinguish the radical from the more conventional perspective is to say that the radicals see the labor market as relatively inelastic, with a certain proportion or potential workers being unemployed because the economy does not need as many workers as there are job-seekers, while the more conventional assumption is that the demand for workers is fairly elastic so that if there were more productive workers to be hired, economic activity would expand and provide jobs for them. Dual labor market theory is also relevant to this debate because it too is based on the belief that mobility is more restricted than our national mythology holds. Whereas we like to think anyone who works hard can move into positions of authority and responsibility, dual labor market theory states that adults who are in the secondary labor market are blocked from the primary labor market where such rewards may be found.

According to Mangum and Walsh:

> Examination of job content suggests that about one-third of jobs are "do-able" by anyone with the equivalent of a standard high school education and reasonable manual dexterity. Another approximately one-third require some on-the-job but no preentry training and the remainder require some formal preentry training (1978, pp. 177-178).

If most jobs require so little in the way of specific skills, then punctuality, diligence, and obedience to authority become the prime virtures. But if the display of these virtues simply guarantees a steady low-paying job, there will continue to be a substantial proportion of people who will choose independence and self-indulgence instead and who will, as a consequence, experience high unemployment and low earnings (Willis, 1977). Those who persist in "good work habits" at low-level jobs will too frequently feel unsatisfied

by their work (Work in America, 1973) and will pass on to their children values that serve to perpetuate low status rather than to foster upward mobility (Kohn, 1977).

Rubin (1976) notes that the greatest irony of our national mythology is that it convinces those who suffer the most from limited opportunities that they alone are responsible for their failure to achieve high economic and social status.

> We proliferate "people changing" programs--programs with which we hope to change the manners, the mores, and the lifeways of the poor and the working class. Then, we tell ourselves and them, they will be able to move into the more privileged sectors of the society. A comforting illusion! But one that avoids facing the structured reality that there's no room at the top and little room in the middle; that no matter what changes people or groups make in themselves, this industrial society requires a large work force to produce its goods and service its needs--a work force that generation after generation comes from working-class families. These families reproduce themselves not because they are somehow deficient or their culture aberrant, but because there are no alternatives for most of their children. Indeed, it may be the singular triumph of this industrial society--perhaps of any social order--that not only do we socialize people to their appropriate roles and stations, but that the process by which this occurs is so subtle that it is internalized and passed from parents to children by adults who honestly believe they are acting out of choices they have made in their own lifetime (pp. 210-211).

Summary

Radical critics of U.S. economic and social arrangements argue that education is a weak influence on status attainment. Whether one achieves a high or a low position in the occupational hierarchy, they assert, depends far more on one's family background than on personal characteristics and educational attainment. Schools, rather than providing opportunities for the ablest young people to achieve higher status, effectively sort people into social strata and prepare them for their different stations in life. Members of minority groups that face discrimination are particularly limited in the range of occupations to which they can reasonably aspire. Therefore, they adopt attitudes and behavior that are functional in their environment but that demonstrate to society's gatekeepers that they are unfit for higher positions.

Although there are always individuals whose life histories can be cited as proof that opportunities for mobility exist, evidence is very strong that young people from poor and especially from minority families are far less likely than middle class white young people to obtain either the educational credentials or the occupational opportunities that lead to relatively comfortable middle class earnings. Employment and training programs may make it possible for some disadvantaged youth to avoid abject poverty and persistent unemployment and for a few to defy the odds against achieving affluence, but they cannot by themselves breach the barriers separating socio-economic classes. They should not be expected to do so.

D. An Ecological Perspective on Work Experience and Employability

This section anticipates the recommendations to be proposed in Part Two. It states some of my biases regarding the most productive way to think about both research and programs. A theme running through previous sections of this paper is the importance of variations among individuals, categories of people, and among different work settings. The radical perspective introduced the importance of structural forces in determining the employability of individuals and groups. This ecological perspective attempts to comprehend these forces and this variation and to comprehend as well a multitude of interactions between work experiences and experiences youth have in other settings and between present experiences and experiences they have had in the past and expect to have in the future. Although there is danger that the effort to take into account so much diversity and so many forces may lead to despair, research and programs that ignore these matters are likely to be ineffective.

The principal contribution of an ecological perspective is its emphasis on multiple interactions in contrast to simple cause and effect relations. An ecological perspective on work experience and its effects on employability takes into account the reciprocal effects of experience and employability and a multitude of forces impinging on both.

Attending to all these influences quickly becomes overwhelming, but acknowledging them makes it harder to accept oversimplified explanations and generalizations that go beyond the data presented.

An ecological perspective on youth work experience and employability assumes diversity in both individuals and the nature of their work. Dewey (1938) defines experience as the interaction of objective and subjective conditions -- what is outside the person and what the person brings to the situation. Therefore, experience is unique rather than uniform. Two young people working as clerks in the same store will have two different work experiences because they will perceive and respond to what happens in that workplace differently based on both innate differences and differences in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they have acquired from previous experience. The meaning of the work will be different for each. Two different people working in two different jobs, one as an apartment building custodian and the other as an assembly line worker, for example, will clearly have very different work experiences.

Diversity does not rule out generalization, however. There may still be some common threads or trends that can be associated with youth work experience. Some of those have been identified above in the research bearing on the effects of work on development. However, there are likely to be additional trends that can be identified if both the nature of the work and the characteristics of the youth are differentiated; that is, patterns of interaction may be discovered among types of jobs or programs and types of youth. For policy purposes the most important category of youth to learn about is the disadvantaged, those whose employability is impaired because of their race and/or low family income. Other characteristics of youth that are probably associated with differences in work experience and employability are age, gender, ethnicity, location (i.e., urban, suburban, rural), and region of the country.

The ecological approach presented by Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that work experience must be understood as it interacts with experiences youth are having or have had in other settings. Home, school, peer group(s), neighborhood, and voluntary organization(s)

would appear to be the settings in which youth are most often found, in addition to the workplace. Among the important questions to ask about these different settings and their mutual interaction is how consistent they are in the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior they engender. Walther's (1976) discussion of "competing competencies" points out that peer groups and neighborhoods in disadvantaged subcultures may encourage behavior that conflicts directly with that required by employers. Ogbu's (1974) sensitive exploration of "folk beliefs" among poor blacks reveals that parents often give their children an inadvertant double message: you should work hard so you will succeed, but no matter how hard a black person works, he isn't allowed to succeed in this white-dominated society.

One implication of examining the different settings, along with the workplace, in which young people live their lives is that efforts to enhance the employability of disadvantaged youth encounter stiff opposition from some of those settings and other settings may not be as supportive as they could be. Schools, for example, may intend to make students more employable but operate in a manner that encourages sporadic attendance and minimal performance. Employment and training programs must as least take these potential sources of opposition into account. It would be ideal if they could also find ways to focus the influence of several settings in the same direction. Smith (1968) reports a fascinating experiment in improving the elementary school performance of inner city black children by enlisting the aid of parents, among other techniques. Work experience programs might be designed to work with parents as well as youth to engender such work habits as punctuality and diligence. Some work experience programs may be able to foster peer support for the lessons they are trying to teach by encouraging constructive interaction among participants.

Another implication of attending to settings that interact with the workplace is that drawn by Hamilton and Crouter (1980). They suggest that to have the greatest effect on development, youth work experience should be optimally "discontinuous" with participants' previous experiences; that is, it should differ substantially from the partici-

pants' previous experience in selected ways. Work experience that is totally at odds with what a young person has known is not likely to make that person more employable, but it also can be argued that at the other extreme, when work experience simply reiterates what family, school, and other settings have already taught, it is not likely to have a strong impact either. The kind of program that Mangum and Walsh (1978) criticize for putting large numbers of disadvantaged youth together can be characterized as continuous with a disadvantaged youth's experiences in school and neighborhood, experiences that tell such young people they are not worthwhile.

An ecological perspective should take into account the time frame within which the phenomena of interest occur. One aspect of time has already been mentioned, the past experiences and future aspirations of the individual as they affect and are affected by present experiences. Another is historical time, trends and events that affect people's lives. Connecting these two aspects of time are social norms regarding age-appropriate behavior. War and depression are two examples of historical events that drastically affect the work experience and employability of young people. Subtler variations in the economy also have an impact, as do long-term trends. The continuous refinement of technology since the industrial revolution has profoundly affected work, learning, family/life, social structure, and politics. Currently the shift in proportions of jobs away from manufacturing and toward service places a lower premium on the acquisition of technical and manual skills and a higher on social skills. Cohort size, another historical phenomenon, has had a strong impact on youth work and learning in recent years because of the unusually large size of the youth cohort. The current decline in that age group will again change the conditions of youth work and employment prospects.

Age-related social norms connect personal and historical time. Certain kinds of behavior are expected of people of different ages. Those ages and expectations change over time and vary among cultures and subcultures. Middle class youth in the United States, for example, are expected to continue their schooling into their early twenties, when full-time work and marriage become appropriate. Working class youth are more

likely to make the transition from full-time schooling to full-time work and to enter marriage earlier. Deviations from norms such as these result in substantially different work experiences for youth with consequences for employability. The effect of part-time work on the employability of a 16-year-old drop-out will be different from the effect of part-time work on the employability of a student. Similarly, frequent movement from job-to-job accompanied by frequent periods of unemployment appears to be the norm for non-college men for three or four years following high school. The same employment pattern in a 26-year-old is taken as evidence of a serious problem.

Summary

An ecological perspective attempts to comprehend rather than to control variation. Variations among young people that must be attended to in order to understand the effects of work experience on employability include age, gender, race, class, ethnicity, location, and region. Consistent with the radical perspective, these variables are not seen as intrinsically important but as important within the context of current economic, political, and social structures. Being 17 years old or Hispanic has no significance in isolation; the cultural meanings of those facts make them significant. That significance can be measured in gross terms such as lifetime employment and earnings, but it can be understood only in the physical and social contexts, the settings, in which people live their lives. For youth, the most important settings are home, school, peer group(s), workplace(s), neighborhood, and voluntary organization(s). The way in which work experience prepares youth for future employment can be understood only as the interactions among these settings are understood and as systematic variations among different categories of youth and different types of work are understood. Furthermore, the experiences youth have in the settings where they live now are strongly affected simultaneously by their previous experiences and by their future aspirations. Affecting all of these interactions are historical events and trends and social norms regarding age-appropriate behavior.

A particular study or a particular employment program need not attempt to address all of these sources of influence. It should, however, reflect awareness of what is not

being addressed and adjust research conclusions and program objectives accordingly. Since youth who are disadvantaged by race and family income face the greatest barriers to successful employment, the effects of work experience on employability of these youth are of greatest interest. Knowledge about other categories of youth may be required for comparisons that shed light on the condition of the disadvantaged. Consistent with the radical perspective, an ecological perspective helps to place employment and training programs for youth in the context of a larger effort to make work life and society as a whole more supportive of human development by making them more democratic.

Part Two. Recommendations

A. Program Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to employment and training programs for low-income and minority youth. They have to do with maximizing the effectiveness of the work experience provided by those programs for the purpose of increasing the employability of participants. Since the function of work experience in employability has been described in terms of selection and preparation, the recommendations will be categorized in those two ways as well.

Selection

Mangum and Walsh (1978) have already called attention to the critical importance of a program's reputation among employers to its ability to improve the employability of participants. Unless program staff are masters of deception, the first consideration in establishing a program's reputation must be program quality. Some aspects of quality are discussed below in terms of the preparation function. But even a program that is judged to be first rate by experts and by participants will not have a good reputation unless staff engage in effective public relations. The active involvement of local employers through Private Industry Councils and other means can contribute to public relations, and to program quality.

More overtly promotional forms of public relations might include careful attention (ideally with professional assistance) to the timely release of newsworthy stories. Yearly figures on numbers of trainees placed would qualify if they were impressive. A human interest story on a participant making good in his/her career is another example. A story about a specific employer who has consistently hired participants might encourage others to do the same. Testimonials of participants and of satisfied employers before business or civic association meetings or managers of a single business might be effective, especially if combined with graphic information about the program and an opportunity to solicit employers' needs and opinions.

I suspect that many program staff have discovered effective forms of public relations. Means of sharing these ideas and administrative recognition of the importance of these activities, in the form of allocating staff time and other resources, might be helpful. If, as Mangum and Walsh contend, program reputation is critical, then public relations cannot be treated as an afterthought.

A second approach to improving the selection function, entirely consistent with attending to a program's reputation, is developing an efficient and credible system of credentialing participants. This entails first documenting participants' activities and their performance levels then reporting the relevant information to potential employers. Program reputation is probably the most critical factor in the credibility of such credentials, but specificity should help; i.e., reporting specific competencies developed or demonstrated and reporting information, such as attendance, that is likely to be of great interest to employers. As in the supported work program, it may be most beneficial to participants to build up slowly to the point where their performance in the program will be reported in detail. This would allow time for those with initially poor attendance, for example, to gain confidence in themselves and understanding of the program before their attendance would become part of their credentials.

Preparation

The studies cited in Part One, especially that by Somers and Warlick (1975) provide a basis for optimism regarding the ability of employment and training programs to instill in some of their participants knowledge, skills, and attitudes that prepare them for the labor market. The extent to which a program does this is the definition of its quality. The only question is how, concretely, programs can be improved in their capacity to prepare disadvantaged youth for employment.

Mangum and Walsh (1978) make many sound recommendations. First, what Walther (1976) calls "coping skills" are much more appropriate objectives than specific job skills. Second, programs must establish clear and reasonable expectations for participants'

performance, especially regarding attendance and deportment, in order to prevent the subversion of the entire program by those who are least able to benefit from it. The most bothersome consequence of this otherwise perfectly sensible policy is that some who need help most will be excluded. The hard-headed response to this concern is that no program can help everyone. This is certainly true, though sad, and it should be recognized by program staff and policy makers. Once that limitation has been accepted, it becomes possible to decide what the standards are and how far a program can be stretched to accomodate those least prepared for employment. The supported work program and successful rehabilitation programs for ex-offenders and drug abusers have in common a progressive sequence of privileges and responsibilities that participants move through at their own pace with clear knowledge of what they must do to reach the next stage and clear incentives for movement. Participants or potential participants should only be excluded on the basis of clear behavioral evidence that they are not yet ready to benefit from the program and with carefully defined guidelines regarding what future behavior would be accepted as evidence of readiness. That is, exclusion should be provisional not final, except in cases of repeated failure to perform satisfactorily.

The third recommendation from Mangum and Walsh to be elaborated here is that supportive services should complement work experience. Counseling, placement, and classroom instruction are the three types of services they stress (p. 74). They extract from Walther (1976) a series of recommendations regarding the goals for counseling (Mangum and Walsh, 1978, pp. 143-145). It is always difficult to assess the effectiveness of counseling, not only because of ambiguous criteria but also because apparent ineffectiveness frequently results from inadequate training and/or overloading of counselors, which do not allow a fair trial of counseling as an adjunct to work experience. Designing programs in which these services are truly effective and complementary is very challenging. The identification of models and dissemination of principles and practices would be useful.

Mangum and Walsh also plead for realistic expectations regarding the kinds of jobs employment and training program participants are placed in. They point out how unrealistic

it is to expect that high school dropouts will be prepared for white collar jobs for which college graduates are competing. I have reinforced this point by referring to the argument that occupational status is determined more by family background than by any effort of the individual. However, with these limitations firmly in mind, I recommend that programs offer the widest possible range of work experiences as far up the occupational hierarchy (defined by prestige and pay) as is feasible. Again the notion of a progression of opportunities and responsibilities is apt. Participants who have demonstrated their reliability, their responsiveness to supervision, and their ability to learn in lower-level work experiences should be able to move into higher-level positions. This, of course, is what will ideally happen in the labor market without intervention, but the process can be planned and supervised for youth who demonstrate promise while they are still eligible to participate in employment and training programs.

The problem of incentives for employers to take on disadvantaged youth is even greater for higher level positions than for the standard sort of placements. Experience-Based Career Education (EBCE) and the Executive High School Intern Program (EHSIP) have had great success in finding unpaid positions for youth at or near the higher levels of the occupational hierarchy. While these programs have served a predominantly middle class group of students, EBCE has been used successfully with low-income youth. It would be worth experimenting with the payment of stipends to low-income youth participating in programs like these in order to make it possible for them to earn some income while gaining unpaid work experience at a level that would not be available to them as a paying job. This kind of work experience would require even more effort on the part of program staff and employers than the placement of youth in the kinds of jobs their parents do because of the unfamiliar demands made on disadvantaged youth by higher level occupations.

This proposal recalls the notion of "discontinuity" introduced in connection with the ecological perspective. Experience in a program such as this would be different in may ways from the everyday experiences of a disadvantaged youth. It would, therefore, have great potential for instigating developmental change, provided that it was not

so divergent as to be rejected completely. Any effort to increase the employability of disadvantaged youth must be carried out with a clear understanding of the competing forces in participants' homes, schools, peer groups and neighborhoods.

In addition to recognizing the reality of such competing forces and seeking the optimal level of discontinuity between a program and the other settings in which participants live their lives, programs should try to develop methods of reinforcing in those other settings the lessons they are trying to teach. This issue has been explored with respect to schools, but mostly at the elementary level. It becomes more difficult to deal with what Bronfenbrenner (1979) terms the "mesosystem," the connections linking the various "microsystems" or settings a person occupies, when the person of interest becomes older. Young children spend time in fewer settings, their families are more central to them, and their parents exercise more direct supervision and control over them than youth. Therefore, attempts to involve parents in employment and training programs may be regarded by youth as unwarranted infringement into an area where they are independent from their parents. However, there may be some realtively simple forms of involvement that might be effective.

Assuring that parents understand the purposes and requirements of a program is a first step to enlisting their aid in achieving those purposes and meeting those requirements. Parents can encourage and support punctuality and regular attendance if they know what the expectations are and if they are notified when problems arise. Experiments should be tried with reading and/or discussion groups for parents either with or in parallel to their children's reading and discussions. Parental involvement can be safely predicated on the assumption that the parents of disadvantaged youth are every bit as concerned about their children's futures and have equally high aspirations as middle class parents. The difference is in the limited ability that disadvantaged parents have to teach their children what is required for academic and vocational success, to provide optimal conditions for achievement in those areas, and to act on behalf of their children in schools and in the labor market.

Even more difficult than involving parents would be involving peer groups. Much is made of the detrimental influences of peer groups on youth, and the positive effects are frequently ignored. Therapeutic modes have been developed that use "positive peer culture" and such an approach might help to make peer groups reinforce rather than compete with employment and training programs. One way to do this is to work at building strong bonds among program participants, making the program group a significant peer group. Another way is to admit previously-formed peer groups as units and to allow the members to stay together. Strong group ties can be formed rather quickly when people are placed in residential settings, especially if they are confronted with challenges requiring cooperative solutions, for example, those employed in Outward Bound programs. The recruitment of intact peer groups into programs poses many problems, but there are undoubtedly "street workers" who could do it.

An ecological perspective, as noted in Part One, takes into account differences among people. Programs for low-income youth who are disproportionately non-white must recognize that there remain important differences within this category of youth. Trow, as reported by the Carnegie Council (1979, p. 247) has proposed a four-part typology of youth based on the adequacy of family financial resources and of early education and socialization.

TROW'S TYPOLOGY OF YOUTH

		Early education and socialization: Adequate	Early education and socialization: Inadequate
Family financial resources	Adequate	The advantaged	The alienated
	Inadequaate	The disadvantaged	The deprived

The advantaged come from financially secure homes and receive functional education and socialization. The alienated are inadequately educated or socialized despite their

families' resources. The disadvantaged, in Trow's terminology, are that large group that was once known as "the deserving poor," who maintain strong families and take advantage of available educational opportunities despite limited income. The deprived are those who have been overwhelmed by poverty and discrimination and who are plagued by such consequences as criminal behavior, addiction, unemployment, and welfare dependency.

Trow's distinction between the disadvantaged and the deprived, which he derived from studies of CETA programs, reminds those responsible for programs for low-income youth that some of those youth are ready to take advantage of whatever assistance is available, while others need extensive support just to get to the point where they can participate satisfactorily in the same kind of program. Both of these groups -- and, of course, they merely typify a range of low-income people -- need and deserve employment and training programs but the same programs will not work equally well with both. The Carnegie Council singles out such programs as Job Corps and supported work as having succeeded in meeting the needs of the deprived. A range of programs must be available so that an appropriate match can be made between the seriousness of a particular young person's needs and the intensity of the services provided. Programs should be targeted to specific levels of need within the low-income youth population.

B. Research Recommendations

In order to maximize the impact on employability of work experience gained through employment and training programs for low-income youth, we need to know more about how employers in appropriate sectors of the labor market treat work experience when hiring young adults from low-income families. A series of related questions follows.

a. Do employers prefer applicants with experience? If so, why?

b. How strong is the preference?

c. Is any experience valued or just relevant experience? How is relevance determined?

d. Is a good work record expected? How is this determined?

e. Is subsidized work experience valued? Under what circumstances?

f. What are the preferred form and content of work experience credentials?

g. Is unpaid experience -- internships, volunteer work, unpaid on-the-job training -- valued? How does its value compare to that of paid work experience? What sorts of credentials best demonstrate its value?

h. What sorts of references from what sorts of people are valuable for job-seekers who have no experience?

i. How do primary labor market employers treat work experience that has been gained in the secondary labor market?

j. What kinds of experience do primary labor market employers value in applicants seeking their first position in the primary labor market?

Some of this information could probably be obtained relatively informally and inexpensively from employers already active in bodies such as Private Industry Councils and Work/Education Councils. A mail or telephone survey could provide information from a larger sample. But reports from employers on their own organizations' hiring practices should not be accepted at face value. Racial and gender discrimination are against the law and will be absent from any official descriptions of hiring practices. They certainly exist in the labor market or the laws against them would be unnecessary. Furthermore the people who actually make hiring decisions for lower level positions in large organizations may not be the ones who respond to a survey. Again the stated policy may diverge from actual practice.

As one method of gaining reliable information about who gets hired for what kinds of jobs, I would propose training a multi-racial group of young people with acting skills to apply for a large selection of jobs with systematically varied credentials and interview behavior. This would be more costly than a survey but it would yield much more valid findings. Its major costs would be in the resources invested by employers in processing false credentials submitted by applicants with no intention of accepting a job and in the resentment likely to be felt by employers who are deceived. These costs might

outweigh the benefits of this proposal, but it is an example of an effort to secure more valid information about hiring practices than can be obtained by survey.

Knowledge about the transition and barriers to transition of workers without college degrees from the secondary to the primary labor markets would be helpful. It seems likely that work experience is not as important in securing employment for those with advanced and specialized academic credentials as for those with little education. Information about how frequently high school graduates enter the primary labor market and through what channels they do so would help to make employment and training programs more realistic and more effective. Much of this information may already be available. A thorough literature search in this area should precede any large-scale data collection.

Ogbu's (1974) ethnographic study of education in a black community has the best information I have seen on how socialization and information from families can contradict what is explicitly taught in school. (See Willis, 1977, for an excellent account of this process in England.) I have suggested in Part One that consistency or lack of consistency in the messages young people receive about work from home, school, workplace, peer group, and voluntary organizations might well have a strong impact on their work attitudes and behavior. This should be treated as a hypothesis and explored with the kinds of ethnographic methods Ogbu and Willis employed. The results could help to identify both areas of conflict that employment and training programs have to overcome and areas of agreement that could be capitalized on by involving people from these other settings in working toward the goals of the programs.

The program recommendations presented above entail evaluation research to inform program development (formative evaluation) and to assess the effectiveness of various types of programs and program components (summative evaluation). These two functions should not be viewed as separate. Instead, demonstration efforts should be mounted that are guided by a continuous evaluation process that helps program staff monitor the implementation and early effects and to assess the relative costs and benefits of a new approach. Such evaluations cannot be based on the assumption that there is one

best program. The ecological perspective emphasizes the enormous variation among people and situations; no single program model can comprehend this variation. Furthermore, real programs are more complicated than models. What works in one place will not work in another similar place because of the failure of a key employer to cooperate or because the director in one place was extraordinarily energetic or for any number of other uncontrollable reasons. Evaluations should seek different ways in which programs are effective, not the one way. Following are some of the questions that should be addressed by evaluations of programs trying out the recommendations offered above.

a. How can programs' reputations be improved?

b. What kinds of credentialing systems appear to be most effective?

c. Do participants in programs of different quality demonstrate different levels of employability?

d. What kinds of programs work best for what kinds of youth? How can the match be made?

e. What does routine work experience contribute to employability?

f. Does unpaid experience in upper-level workplaces improve employability?

g. Does the involvement of parents and peers in programs increase their effectiveness?

h. How can parents and peers best be involved in programs?

i. Are there some generalizations that can be made about <u>how</u> successful programs got to be successful? What are those programs' organizational characteristics and how did they develop?

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